

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 2170

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TPHY, NP
SUBJECT: SCIENTIFIC PACKAGE FOR TOP OF ANNAPURNA

1. IN VIEW OF RECENT FOCUS ON NANDA DEVI INCIDENT IN INDIA,
WHAT HAD BEEN ROUTINE REQUEST TO EMBASSY FOR ASSISTANCE MAY BE
TAKING ADDED DIMENSIONS REQUIRING FURTHER INFORMATION AND/OR
GUIDANCE. DETAILS AS FOLLOWS:

2. GROUP OF AMERICAN WOMEN HEADED BY DR. ARLENE BLUM IS
PLANNING CLIMB OF ANNAPURNA I IN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1978. WHEN
DR. BLUM CALLED ON EMBOFF IN DECEMBER 77 SHE MENTIONED THAT
STANFORD UNIVERSITY HAD ASKED GROUP'S ASSISTANCE IN CARRYING
SCIENTIFIC PACKAGE TO BE PLACED ON TOP OF PEAK. DR. BLUM
STATED HER GROUP WAS PREPARED TO PROVIDE THIS SERVICE, ASSUMING
OF COURSE THAT GON AGREED TO PROJECT. DR. BLUM HAD MADE
SOME PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES TOWARDS LATTER OBJECTIVE
BUT WITHOUT DEFINITE RESULTS. SHE OPINED THAT STANFORD MIGHT
WISH SEEK EMBASSY'S ASSISTANCE IN TRYING TO PUSH ITS PROJECT
WATHROUGH GON.

2. IN JANUARY, AMBASSADOR RECEIVED LETTER FROM DR. CHUNG G.
PARK OF STANFORD ELECTRONICS LABORATORIES, STANFORD UNIVERSITY
ENCLOSING LETTER FROM PARK TO HEAD OF NEPALESE COUNCIL OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NCST) EXPLAINING PROJECT AND ASKING
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FOR PERMISSION FOR PACKAGE TO BE TAKEN TO SUMMIT OF ANNAPURNA
I. EMBOFF DELIVERED LETTER TO DR. AMIR SHRESTHA, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF NCST ON FEBRUARY 3, RAISING IT AS BUT ONE ITEM
AMONG SEVERAL FOR DISCUSSION. EMBOFF STRESSED THAT
PROJECT WAS PRIVATE, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ONE, BUT
OFFERED OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IF ZDSIRED. SINCE THEN
WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING, ALTHOUGH IT IS POSSIBLE THAT DR. SHRESTHA

HAS COMMUNICATED DIRECTLY WITH DR. PARK.

3. PURPOSE OF EXPERIMENTAL PACKAGE AS DESCRIBED BY DR. PARK TO DR. SHRESTHA IS "TO MEASURE ATMOSPHERIC ELECTRIC FIELD STRENGTH AND WIND SPEED", WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL DETAILS ALSO PROVIDED. IF ALL WORKS AS PLANNED, INSTRUMENT WOULD REPORTEDLY BE IN PLACE FOR SIX MONTHS WITH ANOTHER AMERICAN EXPEDITION PICKING IT UP DURING A CLIMB OF ANNAPURNA I SCHEDULED FOR SPRING 1979. DR. PARK DESCRIBED POWER SOURCE ONLY AS "A BATTERY, DESIGNED TO LAST FOR APPROXIMATELY 6 MONTHS."

4. ON APRIL 25, UPI CORRESPONDENT BHOLA RANA ASKED FOR APPOINTMENT WITH CHARGE AND RAISED ABOVE SUBJECT, SAYING HE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE STORY IN VIEW OF NANDA DEVI INCIDENT. RANA APPEARED KNOWLEDGEABLE ON DETAILS REPORTED ABOVE, AND SAID HE HAD TALKED WITH GON ABOUT MATTER AND HAD SEEN CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN STANFORD AND NCST. HE ASKED BOUT DEGREE OF OFFICIAL U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECT, AND CHARGE EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS ENTIRELY PRIVATE PROJECT ON U.S. SIDE. IN RESPONSE TO RANA'S QUERY WS TO WHETHER EMBASSY HAD DELIVERED LETTER TO NCST AND HAD "PUSHED" PROJECT, CHARGE CONFIRMED THAT EMBASSY HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY STANFORD TO CONVEY LETTER TO NCST AND HAD DONE SO IN ROUTINE MANNER, BUT HAD NOT "PUSHED" PROJECT AND THERE HAD BEEN NO SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EMBASSY AND GON ON MATTER. RANA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PROJECT HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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APPROVED BY HOME-PANCHAYAT MINISTRY AND WAS NOW AWAITING APPROVAL BY TOURISM MINISTRY. RANA DID NOT RAISE QUESTION OF POWER SOURCE FOR PROPOSED PACKAGE.

5. DEPARTMENT, STANFORD, AND ANNAPURNA WOMEN CLIMBERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THERE HAS BEEN A SLIGHT FALL-OUT IN NEPAL RE NANDA DEVI INCIDENT. LOCAL PAPERS REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER BISTA WAS QUESTIONED DURING INDIAN VISIT ON WHETHER ANYTHING SIMILAR HAD HAPPENED IN NEPAL, TO WHICH HE REPORTEDLY REPLIED

THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION ON SUCH A DEVELOPMENT, ADDING THAT MOUNTAINEERS TO THE NEPALESE HIMALAYAS WERE UNDER CHECK BY LIAISON OFFICERS TO SEE TO IT THAT THEY DID NOT ENGAGE IN ANY IRREGULAR ACT. WE HAVE ALSO SEEN ONE EDITORIAL IN A NEPALI-LANGUAGE PAPER, A LETTER TO THE EDITOR, AND A BRIEF COMMENT BY THE EDITOR OF THE OFFICIAL RISING NEPAL IN HIS WEEKLY COLUMN. THESE BRIEF COMMENTARIES HAVE GENERALLY SOUGHT ASSURANCES RE POSSIBLE PAST ACTIVITIES AND URGED ADVISABILITY OF TIGHTER CONTROLS ON FUTURE EXPEDITIONS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: IN VIEW OF ABOVE DEVELOPMENTS AND

IN ORDER ASSESS POSSIBLE PROS AND CONS OF THIS PROJECT,
WE NEED TO KNOW SOONEST FOR OUR OWN INFORMATION DETAILS
ON POWER SOURCE FOR PROPOSED PACKAGE, I.E., EXACT NATURE
OF BATTERY. IT WOULD ALSO BE WORTHWHILE TO LEARN WHETHER
DR. PARK HAS HAD ANY COMMUNICATION FROM NCST IN REPLY TO
HIS LETTER, AND REACTION OF DRS. PARK AND BLUM TO
CARRYING THROUGH ON PROJECT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.
LATTER SHOULD BE REACHABLE AT "AMERICAN WOMEN'S HIMALAYAN
EXPEDITION," 846 LATHROP DRIVE, STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305.
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